

in the profession of social work, recognize the great achievements and accomplishments that they have made and urge we recognize their importance to our society.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. HENSARLING addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. CONYERS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE NATIONAL BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. CASE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CASE. Madam Speaker, here we go again. Here we are to talk about a subject our majority colleagues and our administration do not want to talk about. They are hoping it will just go away. That subject is our national budget or, more directly, the conspicuous lack thereof.

Madam Speaker, my constituents ask me all the time, what do I think is the most important challenge facing our country? What is the one thing that we have to work on more than anything else? I can reply to them, in all honesty and candor and directness, that it is the very solvency of their Federal Government.

Why should that be? Why is it not the economy? Why is it not education? Why is it not our deteriorating relationship with the rest of the world? Why is it not Social Security?

The reason is simple. Without a strong fiscal underpinning, we cannot do everything or anything else. We can have a great old talk, we can have a great old debate, but unless the fiscal solvency of our country is strong, we are not going anywhere. Put another way, unless we take care of today, our children will not be able to take care of tomorrow.

We think we all know now, do we not, that we are in pretty bad shape? In fact, we are in real bad shape; and we are going downhill fast. The largest deficits we have ever seen, no end in sight, debt going up, interest rates going up, irresponsible budgeting, like going out only 5 years of a budget when we know that the big expenses come in the sixth year.

And we all know that the budget passed by this House just a week ago by a mere three-vote margin is not going to solve that problem. In fact, it is going to worsen it.

How did we get here? How did we ever allow ourselves to come to this place?

Just 3, 4 years ago we were on the right track. We had spending under control. We had revenues coming in. We had budgets that were heading towards balance. We had debt ceilings that were low relative to GDP.

□ 2000

How did we arrive here? Well, the first thing we did is pretty obvious. We consistently reduced revenues while increasing expenses. What do we expect when we do that over a period of years? Second, though, we did not have basic rules to live by. When we are talking about whether to increase this particular program or increase this particular tax or reduce this particular program, we can talk about that program or that tax all we want, but it has got to fit into a big picture. And those are rules to live by; and if we live within those rules within that box, we end up with balanced budgets because we make decisions that are related to each other.

And, third, the rules that we did have, we ignored. We talked at length about the first consequence. We have talked about that for many years now. I think it is finally sinking in. We cannot both slash revenues and increase expenses and expect everything to be okay; and yet that is what the budget we just passed and sent into a conference with the Senate does.

Yesterday, we talked at length about the second part of it, rules that have worked in the past and that we no longer have, PAYGO. PAYGO, a very simple concept that we pay as we go. That as we reduce in one area, we have to increase in another area. We talked about consequences that when we reduce over here, there is a consequence that has to be addressed over here. That is what balance is. This is balance. Those rules set the boundaries for what we could do. PAYGO, that is what this House just rejected yesterday on a vote of 209 to 209. That is what the Senate has done. I support the Senate and praise the Senate for its actions to institute PAYGO, and I beg those conferees going in on behalf of the House to do the right thing.

But today I want to address the third part of it, rules that exist today that are not followed. We have under our system a debt ceiling. It is designed as a check and balance. It is designed to make each one of us stand up and say that no matter how much debt we accumulate because of the decisions, no matter how reckless, no matter how irresponsible, for that matter, we have to vote separately to increase the total debt that we collectively carry through our U.S. Government. And that is what we are doing. We are carrying debt. When we run deficits year after year after year, the money does not just grow out of nowhere. It does not grow on trees. It is not found in a stash somewhere. We borrow it. We issue notes, bonds. We take it out of trust funds. We borrow it. And the total amount is supposed to be limited, and

we have that on the books; but we are ignoring it. In 2001 when this administration started, there was a debt limit substantially lower than where it is.

I want to say one thing in conclusion. A vote for the budget is a vote to increase the debt limit. We have voted to increase the debt limit. We have not taken a separate vote. So when people ask their Member of Congress, did he or she vote for the budget resolution, if the answer is yes, they voted for a substantial increase in the debt limit. Do not hide it. Let us be honest in our budgeting. Let us do this right.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. FILNER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. POMEROY. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my Special Order at this time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from North Dakota?

There was no objection.

OUR NATIONAL DEBT

Mr. POMEROY. Madam Speaker, I want to follow up on comments recently advanced by my colleague from Hawaii, someone who has so quickly thrown himself, tried to make some sense of them, and I appreciate very much the gentleman's conclusions.

We have got a runaway debt. We have got a very serious financial situation facing this country.

We are all familiar with the concept of credit card limits. Maybe we get pretty little limits. Maybe we get even generous limits. But somewhere there is a limit on how much money we can run up on our credit card.

The Nation, similarly, Congress establishes the limit, the credit card limit, for the Federal Government. We do that by a vote of Congress, how much money we are allowed to borrow as a country. And we have got a limit of \$7.384 trillion, \$7.384 trillion. We are allowed to borrow that much as a Nation.

That might give one pause. One might wonder how in the world are we going to get that debt paid off before we all leave the workforce, retire, and turn the country over to our children. Surely it would not be fair to leave our children with this debt.